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THE HISTORY  
OF  
THE PLAGUE IN LONDON,  
IN 1665.



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In the year 1665, the city of London was severely visited by the Plague: an account of the progress and effects of that visitation was kept by a citizen, who remained there during the whole time of the sickness, and who appears to have been true and just in his remarks. It is hoped the reader will, in a short description of that memorable judgment, meet with some lessons of best wisdom, and receive instruction from this close and serious converse with death and the grave. This dreadful contagion in London was introduced by some goods brought from Holland. It first broke out in the house where those goods were opened, from whence it spread to others. In the first house that was infected there died four persons: a neighbour who went to visit them, on returning home, gave the distemper to her family, and died with all her household. The disorder spread, and the parish officers, who were employed about the sick persons, being also infected, the physicians perceived the danger, and upon narrow inspection were assured that it was indeed the Plague with all its terrifying



particulars, and that it threatened a general infection. The people now began to be alarmed all over the town; the number of burials, within the bills of mortality, for a week, was generally about 240 to 300, but from the 24th to the 27th of January the printed bill was 474. However the frost continued very fevere 'till near the end of Febuary, the bills decreased, and people began to look upon the danger as over; but in May, the bills greatly encreased, and the weather becoming hot, the infection spread again in a dreadful manner.

I lived (says the Author) without Aldgate; and as the distemper had not reached to that side of the city, our neighbourhood continued easy, but at the other end of the town the distraction was very great, and the nobility and gentry with their families thronged out of the town in a very unusual manner. Nothing was to be seen but waggons, certs, and coaches with goods, and people and horsemen attending them, hurrying away; then empty waggons and carts appeared, which seemed to be re-

turning to fetch more people, besides great crouds appeared on horseback, fitted out for travelling. This was a very melancholy prospect; indeed there was scarcely any thing else to be seen; it filled my mind with very serious thoughts of the misery that was coming upon the city, and the unhappy condition of those who would be left in it. By the end of July the contagion had spread and encreased to a great degree: sorrow and sadness sat upon every face; and though some parts were not yet overwhelmed, all looked deeply concerned. London might well be said to be all in tears. The mourners did not go about the streets, for nobody made a formal dress of mourning for their nearest relations; but the voice of mourning was, indeed, heard in the streets: the shrieks of women and children at the windows and doors of their houses, when their dearest relations were dying, were so frequently heard as we passed, that it was enough to pierce the stoutest heart. Tears and lamentations were perceived in almost every house, especially in the first part of the visitation; for towards



the latter end, people did not so much concern themselves for the loss of their friends, expecting that they themselves would be summoned the next hour.

It was a time of very unhappy breaches among us, in matters of religion; but this dreadful visitation reconciled the different parties, and took away all manner of prejudice from the people. Yet after the sickness was over, that spirit of charity was lost, and things returned to their old bad channel. Here we may observe, that a nearer view of death would soon reconcile men of good principles to one another; and that it is chiefly owing to our easy situations in life, and our putting these things far from us, that occasions such a want of christian charity. A close view and converse with death, or with diseases that threaten death, would scum off the gall of our tempers, remove our hatred, and bring us to see with different eyes. On the other side of the grave, we shall all be brethren again.



The Inns of court were now all shut up; there were but few lawyers to be seen in the city; indeed there was no need of them, for quarrels and divisions about interest had ceased; every body was at peace. It was also worthy of observation, as well as full of instruction, to remark with what eagerness the people, of all persuasions, embraced the opportunities they had of attending upon the public worship, and other appointed times of devotion, as humiliations, fastings, and public confession of sins, to implore the mercy of God, and turn away the judgments which hung over their heads. The churches were so thronged, that there was often no coming near; no, not to the very door of the largest churches. There were also daily prayers appointed, morning and evening, at which the people attended with uncommon devotion. All plays and public places, which had begun to increase among us, were neglected; the gaming-tables, public dancing-rooms, and music-houses, which had multiplied, and begun to debauch the manners of the people, were shut up and suppressed,

finding no trade ; for the minds of the people were generally humbled and employed with other things. Death was before their eyes, and every body began to think of their graves. The infection continued to increase 'till the middle of August, when there died a thousand a day, by the account of the weekly bills, though they never gave a full account by many thousands ; many of the parish officers were taken sick themselves, and died when their account was to be given in. The parish of Stepney alone had, within the year, one hundred and sixteen sextons, grave-diggers, carriers of the dead, &c. Indeed the work was not of a nature to allow them time to take an exact account of their dead bodies, which were all thrown together in the dark in a pit, to which no man could come near without the utmost danger. I had (says this author) the care of my brother's house, which obliged me sometimes to go abroad. In these walks I had dismal scenes before my eyes, particularly of persons falling dead in the streets, and heard terrible shrieks of women, who, in their agonies, would throw open



their chamber windows, and cry out in a sad and affecting manner. It is impossible to describe the variety of postures, in which the passions of the poor people would express themselves. Passing through Token-house-yard, of a sudden a casement violently opened just over my head, and a woman gave three frightful shrieks, and then cried.—Oh! death! death, death!—which struck me with horror, and caused a chillness in my very blood. There was nobody to be seen in the whole street, neither did any window open, for people had no curiosity, now, in any case. I went on to pass into Bell-Alley, where there was a still greater cry: I could hear women and children run screaming about the rooms like distracted persons. It is hardly to be believed what dreadful calamities happened in particular families every day; people in the rage of the distemper, or in the torment of the swelling, which indeed was intolerable, becoming raving and distracted, oftentimes laid violent hands on themselves, or threw themselves out of the windows, or, breaking out of the houses, would

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dance naked about the streets, not knowing one thing from another. Others, if not prevented, would run directly down to the river, and jump into the water. Some died of mere grief, and some of fright and surprise, without perhaps having received the infection. It often pierced my very soul to hear the groans and cries of those who were thus tormented. But the symptom of swelling was accounted the most particular in the whole infection; for if these swellings could be brought to break and run, the patient generally recovered: whereas, those who were struck with death at the beginning of the distemper, and had spots come upon them, often went about tolerably easy, till a little before they died, and some till the moment they dropped down: such would be taken suddenly very sick, and would run to some convenient place, or to their own houses if possible, and there sit down, grow faint, and die.

The method the magistrates fell into, of locking up the people's doors, where any had taken the distemper, and setting watchmen there night and day, to

prevent any going out to spread the infection, looked hard and cruel, as perhaps those who were found in the family might have escaped, if they had been removed from the sick; but the public good seemed to justify such a conduct, and there was no obtaining the least softening of this conduct from them. This put people, who thought themselves well, upon plans to get out of their confinement. Going out one morning, I heard a great outcry, which prompting my curiosity, I inquired the cause of a person who looked out of a window. A watchman had been employed to watch at the door of a house, which was infected and shut up; both himself, and the day watchman, attended there a day and two nights. All this while no noise had been heard, nor lights seen in the house, neither had they called for any thing. It seems, that two or three days before, the dead-cart had stopped there, and a servant maid had been brought down to the door dead, wrapped only in a rug, which the buriers had put into the cart, and carried away. The next day the watchman heard



great crying and screaming in the house, which he supposed was occasioned by some of the family dying just at that time; upon which he knocked at the door a great while; at last one looked out, and said with an angry quick tone, and the voice of one who was crying, "What d'ye want?" he answered, "I am the watchman, how do you do?" The person replied, "stop the dead cart." This was about one o'clock; soon after he stopped the dead cart, and then knocked again, but nobody answered. He continued knocking, and the bell man called several times, "bring out your dead;" but nobody answered; and the man who drove the cart, being called to other houses, would stay no longer, and drove the cart away. In the morning, when the day watchman came, they knocked at the door a great while; but nobody answering, they got a ladder, and one of them went up to the window, and looking into the room, he saw a woman lying dead upon the floor, in a dismal situation; but though he called aloud, and knocked on the floor with his staff, nobody stirred or answer.



ed. This they made known to the magistrate, who ordered the house to be broke open, when nobody was found in it, but that young woman; who having been infected and past recovery, the rest had left her to die by herself, and were every one gone, having found some way to delude the watchman and go out. As to those cries and shrieks, which he heard, it was supposed they were the passionate cries of the family at the bitter parting, which to be sure it was to them all, this being the sister to the mistress of the family. Many more instances might be given; but these may suffice to show the deep distress of that day. Death did not now hover over every one's head only, but looked into their houses and chambers, and even stared in their faces; and though there were some stupidity and dulness of mind, yet there was a great deal of just alarm founded in the inmost soul: many consciences were awakened, many hard hearts melted, many a penitent made confession of crimes long concealed. People might be heard, even in the streets, as we passed along, calling upon

God for mercy through Jesus Christ; and saying, "I have been an adulterer, I have been a murderer," and the like: and none durst stop to make an enquiry into such things, or to give comfort to the poor creatures, who, in the anguish both of soul and body, thus cried out. Many were the warnings that were then given by dying penitents, to others, not to put off and delay their repentance to a day of distress, that such a time of calamity as this was not the best time for repentance. I wish, (says this author) I could repeat the very sound of those groans and exclamations, that I heard from some poor dying creatures, when in the height of their agony and distress; and that I could make him who reads this, hear, as I imagine I now hear them; for the sound seems still to ring in my ears. In the beginning of September, the number of burials increasing, the church-wardens of Aldgate parish ordered a large pit to be dug, to hold all the dead which might die in a month: it was about forty feet long, and sixteen broad. Some blamed the church-wardens for suffering such a



frightful gulf to be dug; nevertheless, in two weeks, they had thrown more than eleven hundred bodies into it, when they were obliged to fill it up, as the bodies were come within six feet of the top. My curiosity drove me to go and see this pit, when there had been nearly four hundred people buried in it. I got admittance into the church-yard, by means of the sexton, who was a sensible religious man. He would have persuaded me not to go, saying, that "it was indeed their duty to venture, and in it they might hope to be preserved; but that as I had no particular call, he thought my curiosity could not justify my running the hazard." I told him, "I had a great desire in my mind to go; and that, perhaps, it might be an instructing sight." "Nay," says the good man, "if you will venture upon that score, in the name of God, go in; it will be a sermon to you; it may be the best you ever heard in your life."

This discourse had shocked my resolution, and I stood wavering a good while; but just then hearing the bellman, and



the cart loaded with dead bodies appearing, I went in.—There was nobody that I could perceive, at first, with the care but the buriers, and the man who led the cart; but when they came to the pit, they saw a man muffled in a cloak, who appeared in great agony. The buriers immediately gathered about him, supposing he was one of those poor delirious, or desperate creatures, who would sometimes run to the pit, wrapt in blankets, and throw themselves in; and, as they said, bury themselves. When the buriers came to him, they soon found he was neither desperate nor distempered in mind, but one oppressed with a dreadful weight of grief, having his wife and several children, all in the cart that was just come in with him, and he following in an agony and an excess of grief. He calmly desired the buriers to let him alone, and said he would only see the bodies thrown in, and go away; but no sooner was the cart turned round, and the bodies shot into the pit all together, which was a surprise to him, for he at least expected they would have been decently laid in, though, indeed, he was

afterwards convinced that was impossible. No sooner did he see this, but he cried out aloud, unable to contain himself, and fell down in a swoon. The buriers ran to him and took him up, and when he came to himself, led him to a place where he was straken bare of all. He looked into the pit again as he went away, but the buriers had covered the bodies immediately, by throwing in earth, so that nothing could be seen. The cart had in it sixteen or seventeen bodies. Some were wrapped up in linen sheets; some in rugs; some were little sotherwise than naked, or so doofely rich had, that what covering they had fell from them in the flooding out of the cart, and they fell quite naked among the rest; but the matter was not much to them, as every thing became indifferent, feeling they were to be huddled together into the common grave of mankind; for there was no difference, but rich and poor went together. John Hayward, a under-saxton, grave digger, and bearer of the dead, never had the distemper at all, but lived about twenty years after that. His wife was employed to nurse the infected people, yet she herself never caught it. The only thing he used to



keep off the infection, was holding gar-  
 lick and rue in his mouth, and smoak-  
 ing tobacco; this account I had from  
 himself; his wife used to wash her head  
 in vinegar, and sprinkle her clothes so  
 with it as to keep it moist; and if the  
 smell of any of those she waited on was  
 more than, usually bad, she snuffed vin-  
 egar up her nose, put it over her head,  
 and held a handkerchief with it to her  
 mouth.

And here I must not omit mention-  
 ing the disposition of the people of that  
 day with respect to their charities, which  
 indeed were very large, both in a pub-  
 lic and private way. Some pious la-  
 dies were so zealous in this good work,  
 and so confident in the protection of  
 Providence in the discharge of this great  
 duty, that they went about giving alms,  
 and visiting the poor families who were  
 infested, in their very homes, appoint-  
 ing nurses and apothecaries to supply  
 them with what they wanted. Thus  
 giving their blessings to the poor, in sol-  
 id relief, as well as hearty prayers for  
 them. I will not undertake to say that  
 none of these charitable people were  
 suffered to die of the plague; but this

I may say, that I never knew any of them miscarry in their pious work, which I mention for the encouragement of others in cases of like distress. And doubtless, if they that give to the poor lend to the Lord; and he will repay it; those who hazard their lives to give to the poor, and to comfort and assist them in such a misery as this, may hope to be protected in it. From the middle of August, to the middle of September, the infection still increased, and spread itself with wonderful power, and it was reckoned that, during that time, there died no less than sixteen hundred a day. It was then that the confusion and terror of the people was inexpressible; the courage of the persons appointed to carry away the dead began to fail them. The watchfulness of the magistrates was now put to the severest trial. At last the violence of the disorder came to such a height, that the people sat still, looking upon one another, and seemed quite abandoned to despair.



In a word, people began to give themselves up to a fear that there was nothing to be expected but an universal desolation. This despair made people bold and venturous; they were no more shy of one another, as expecting there was no avoiding the distemper, but that all must go: this brought them to crowd into the churches; they no longer inquired what condition the people who sat near them were in, but came without the least caution, and crowded together, as if their lives were of no consequence, compared with the work which they were come about. Indeed their zeal in coming, and the earnestness and affectionate attention they shewed to what they heard, made it manifest what value people would put upon the worship of God, if they thought every day they attended at the church might be their last.

It was in the height of this despair it pleased God to stay his hand, and to slacken the violence of the contagion, in a manner as surprising as that of it's beginning; and which shewed it to be

his own particular hand. Nothing but Almighty power could have done it; the disorder despised all medicine, death raged in every corner, and had it gone on as it did then, a few weeks more would have cleared the town of all it's inhabitants.

In that very moment, when thirty thousand were dead in three weeks, nay, when it was reported three thousand died in one night, and an hundred thousand were taken sick; then we might well say, "vain was the help of man;" it pleased God to cause the force of the distemper to abate, and by his immediate hand to disarm the enemy. It was wonderful! the physicians were surprised, wherever they visited, to find their patients better, and in a few days every body was recovering. Nor was this by any medicine found out, or by any new method of cure discovered; but it was evidently from the secret invisible hand of Him, who had at first sent this disease as a judgment upon us. Let wise men search for reasons in nature to account for it, and labour as much as they



will to lessen the debt they owe their Maker; even those physicians who had the least share of religion in them were obliged to acknowledge the whole was the power of God. The streets were now full of poor recovering creatures; who appeared very sensible, and thankful to God, for their unexpected deliverance: yet, I must own, that as to the generality of the people, it might too justly be said of them, as was said of the children of Israel, after they had been delivered from the host of Pharaoh: "They sung his praise, but they soon forgot his works."

The author, who was preserved unhurt, with his whole family, during the time of this sickness, gives in his history a particular account of the many reasonings and fears which affected his mind, before he could come to a fixed resolution, whether to stay and take his lot in the station in which God had placed him, or, by leaving the city, run the chance of unsettling himself, and of

losing his effects, which lay scattered about. At the earnest entreaties of his brother, he concluded to go; but being always crossed in his design, by several accidents, it came, one morning, as he expresses it, very warmly in his mind, whether these repeated disappointments, were not intimations to him, that it was the will of heaven he should not go; which was succeeded by another thought, that if this hint were from God, he was able to preserve him, in the midst of all death and dangers, that could surround him; and that if he attempted to secure himself, by fleeing from his habitation, and acting contrary to these intimations, which he believed divine, it was a kind of flying from God, who could cause his justice to overtake him, when and where he thought fit.

But what finally fixed him in a resolution to stay, and cast himself entirely upon the protection and good pleasure of the Almighty, was the following



circumstance :—At a time when his thoughts were more than commonly serious upon this weighty subject, turning over the Bible which lay before him, he cried out, “ Well, I know not what to do; Lord, direct me.” At that moment, happening to stop, he cast his eye on the second verse of the 91st Psalm, and read to the 10th verse, as follows; *that it was the will of heaven, that he should not go; which was succeeded by* “ I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge, and my fortress; my God, in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver me from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darknels; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.—Only with thine eye shalt

thou behold, and see the reward of the  
wicked. Because thou hast made the  
Lord, which is thy refuge, even the  
Most High, thy salvation; there shall  
no evil befall thee, neither shall any  
plague come nigh thy dwelling, &c.

*It mounts, triumphant there;  
Or devils plunge it down to hell.  
In infinite despair.*

## A HYMN

### ON DEATH AND ETERNITY.

*SUITED TO THE FOREGOING OCCASION.*

Stoop down, my thoughts, that use to rise,  
Converse awhile with death; go, drop  
Think how a gasping mortal lies,  
And pants away his breath.

His quiv'ring lip hangs feebly down,  
His pulses faint and few;  
Then speechless, with a doleful groan,  
He bids the world adieu.



But oh! the soul that never dies!  
 At once it leaves the clay!  
 Yet thoughts, pursue it where it flies,  
 And track it's wondrous way.  
 Up to the courts where angels dwell  
 It mounts, triumphant there;  
 Or devils plunge it down to hell,  
 In infinite despair.

And must my body faint and die?  
 And must his soul remove?  
 Oh! for some guardian angel nigh,  
 To bear it safe above.

To my Creator's faithful hand,  
 My naked soul I trust;  
 And my flesh waits for thy command,  
 To drop into my dust.  
 Think how a gasping mortal lies,  
 And pants away his breath.

His quivering lip hangs feebly down,  
 His pulses faint and few;  
 Then speechless, with a doleful groan,  
 He bids the world adieu.

# H O N E S T M I L L E R

## O F G L O C E S T E R S H I R E .

A TRUE BALLAD.

OF all the callings and the trades  
Which in our land abound,  
The miller's is as useful sure  
As can on earth be found.

The Lord or 'Squire of high degree  
Is needful to the state,  
Because he lets the land he owns  
In farms both small and great.

The farmer he manures the land,  
Or else what corn could grow?  
The ploughman cuts the furrow deep,  
Ere he begins to sow.

And tho' no wealth he has, except  
The labour of his hands;  
Yet honest industry's as good  
As houses or as lands.



The thresher he is useful too  
 To all who like to eat;  
 Unless be winnow'd well the corn,  
 The chaff would spoil the wheat.

But vain the 'Squire's and Farmer's care,  
 And vain the Thresher's toil; [pains  
 And vain would be the ploughman's  
 Who harrows up the soil.

Of all the callings and the trades  
 In vain, without the miller's aid,  
 The sowing and the dressing;  
 Then sure an honest miller he  
 Must be a public blessing.

The Lord of 'Squire of high degree  
 And such a miller now I make  
 The subject of my song,  
 Which tho' it shall be very true,  
 Shall not be very long.

The farmer he manures the land  
 This miller lives in Glo'stershire,  
 I shall not tell his name;  
 For those who seek the praise of God,  
 Desire no other fame.

And tho' no wealth he has, except  
 The last hard winter—who forgets  
 The frost of ninety five?  
 Yet honest industry he has  
 As houses or as lands.

Then all was dismal, scarce, and dear,  
And no poor man could thrive

Then husbandry long time stood still,  
And work was at a stand :

To make the matter worse, the mills  
Were froze throughout the land.

Fast by a living stream it was  
Our miller's lot to dwell,

Which flow'd again when others froze  
Nor ever stopp'd the mill,

The clamorous people came from far  
This favour'd mill to find ;

Both rich and poor our miller fought  
For none but he could grind.

His neighbours cry'd, ' Now miller seize  
The time to heap up store,

Since thou of young and helpless babes  
Hast got full half a score.'

For folks, when tempted to grow rich  
By means not over nice,

Oft make their num'rous babes a plea  
To sanctify the vice.



And when he ground the grain,  
 With steadfast hand refus'd to touch  
 Beyond his lawful gain.

When God afflicts the land,' said he,  
 Shall I afflict it more?

And watch for times of public woe  
 To wrong both rich and poor?

Thankful to that Almighty power  
 Who makes my river flow,  
 To use the means he gives to sooth  
 A hungry neighbour's woe.

My river flows when others freeze,  
 But 'tis at his command;  
 For none but rich and poor I'll grind alike,

No bribe shall stain my hand.

All the country who had corn  
 Here found their wants redress'd  
 In every village in the land  
 Be with such millers blest!

To sanctify the vice,  
 Of make their numerous babes a plea  
 By means not over nice,  
 For folks who sell

# HAMPSHIRE TRAGEDY

*Shewing how a Servant Maid first robbed her Master  
and was afterwards struck dead for telling a Lie*

AND TRUE STORY.

**C**OME all ye maidens and draw  
A doleful song I sing;  
A song that proves, as you shall hear  
A lie's a fearful thing.

In Hampshire once there chanc'd  
Near Me'onstoke's little town,  
A farming man, who prosper'd well  
An honest country clown.

It was but little he possess'd,  
But then he was content;  
He knew no want, could treat a guest  
And paid his slender rent.



EDY honest industry and thrift  
 He sav'd a little store;  
 And thanking God for every gift,  
 He made that little more.

And now, so lofty was his state,  
 He hir'd a servant maid;  
 Who learning well on him to wait,  
 In truth was duly paid,

One hundred pounds, a mighty sum,  
 He now had sav'd in all;  
 And hid it, (lest some thief should come,)  
 Safe in his kitchen wall.

Length advancing far in years,  
 He calmly view'd his end;  
 For he need never shrink with fears  
 Whose Maker is his friend.

Long time a prey to dire disease,  
 Stretch'd on his bed he lay;  
 His servant saw him ill at ease,  
 And nurs'd him night and day.

When Satan, who like beast of prey,  
 "Seeks whom he may devour,"

Did tempt this servant maid so gay,  
All in an evil hour.

He led her first to see the spot  
Where lay this hidden pelf;

Then bid her form the wicked plot  
To take it for herself.

He whisper'd in her willing ear,  
'Go make it all your own;

For since your master's death is near  
It never can be known.'

At once the wicked girl obey'd  
And fear'd no future ill;

Oh, stupid, sinful, silly maid!  
She dreamt not of a Will.

But had she thought of Him, whose eye  
Sees all the deeds of man;

In vain the tempter had drawn nigh,  
And urg'd his wicked plan.

But love of gain had warp'd her soul  
And drawn her quite away;

To Satan thus, that tempter foul,  
She fell an easy prey.

Her master dies; but first he leaves  
 By will this hundred pound;  
 Tells where 'twas hid, for fear of thieves,  
 And 'twould be surely found.  
 Then, went his friends and search'd the  
 With close and cunning eye;  
 'Twas gone—but nobody could think  
 Which way the pelf could fly.  
 At length the neighbours turn'd a thought  
 To this unhappy maid;  
 They search'd her box, the thief was caught  
 For there the wealth was laid.  
 Then, then, alas! she vow'd and swore,  
 Appealing to Heav'n,  
 That by her master long before  
 This sum was freely given.  
 In curses oft, with forehead bold,  
 She call'd down on her head;  
 And pray'd if any lie she told,  
 That God would strike her dead.  
 She spoke—and straight the sentence pass'd,  
 A sentence strange and rare;



At once the liar breath'd her last,  
Heav'n heard her wicked prayer.

The friends around beheld with fear  
The wretched sinner fall;  
Forc'd in God's presence to appear  
At his most awful call.

And now let us, who still are left,  
Take warning old and young!  
O, let us hate the sin of theft,  
And dread a lying tongue.

Next week will be publish'd The History  
Joseph and his brethren.

